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MR. RUSKIN'S LECTURE—OUTLINE.

(From the *Athenæum*.)

THE lecturer began by defending himself from a charge of wilful misrepresentation, in having asserted that King Alfred, when a boy, was taught reading by his mother, a French princess. He had drawn his knowledge from Sharon Turner, generally considered an authority on such matters. He should, however, repeat that the superior refinement of French Art, the inference which he drew from that fact, was quite incontestable. In going through a collection of illuminated manuscripts, he could, without any previous knowledge, always distinguish the French work by its superior delicacy and refinement. If he found one distinguished by more invention, earnestness and vigor, it was always English,—if equally earnest, but more fettered by precedent, it was German,—if unredeemably coarse, it was Dutch. The same applied to gothic; there could be no question that the French gothic was unequalled, if they took such specimens as Amiens and Notre Dame. The reason why it was not sufficiently appreciated in England was the feeling that French gothic was debased by classical or romanesque influence, having frequently a square abacus, forgetting that, by this principle, the purest gothic is the most debased which has no abacus or capital at all. Mr. Ruskin then proceeded to define an outline. He thought that people forgot that in Nature there was really no such thing as an outline,—no rigid inclosure of space. Look at a tree,—it seems easy to draw its outline,—and, on nearer inspection, it proved a mass of mingled and undefined leaves. The outline of animals was really a thin film of individual hairs. A forest, again, it was impossible to represent; how much more so when it became small, as grass upon the side of a distant mountain.

The lecturer then proceeded to inveigh against the modern system of representing one side of an outline—the one furthest from the light—by a thick, black line, when they all knew the truth and dignity of an outline lay in a hair's breadth. This thickening of an outline was very rare in such pure specimens as he would show them, of Raphael, Albert Durer, and even of Turner—and, when used, was used on the side nearest to the light. He believed that many persons delighted in observing simple facts, and outline was a fact; they could see, even in children, when left alone, and not ruined by being taught to draw, what wonderful likenesses they would scrawl out. He was himself often lost in astonishment at the singular skill of those wandering artists, who snipped out profiles on black paper. As an instance of outline he could show them the figure of an archer drawing a bow, from Claude Lorraine, and one from an old missal. The older painter, in a few touches, had caught every point that indicated the archer, the other was tame and unmeaning. In a manuscript page he then exhibited, he would point to a small white bird in the extreme right hand corner of the page, so small as to require a microscope to see it thoroughly. He then would exhibit the same of colossal size. The eye rolled in its socket, and indicated a bird that knew the world—a bird that knew what he was about—and yet indicated by the modest lines, every one of which had a meaning. Poets and painters have both a common way of attaining their object, which was to concentrate a sermon into a sight. If they could not do this, they did nothing. He then read some extracts from the Procession of the Passions in the House of Pride, from Spenser's "Fairie Queene." The poet wished to convey the impression of Gluttony rapidly before the eye, and he painted him with a crane's neck, filthy, and seated on a swine, feverish, loathsome, and dripping with sweat. It was the peculiar character of English Art, to excel in humor, and when

at play to throw off grotesques. A few touches alone could convey these; elaborate them, and the effect was as tedious as the words of a man straining after effect—a few outline touches, and no more. But look at Stothard:—a great mind spoiled by convention and the necessity of teaching. He tried to represent spiritual nature, not by a few hints and touches, but by great anatomical development. He gave Satan a neat shoe, to foot the fiery marl, and was very particular about the size of his calf.

With regard to illumination, Mr. Ruskin believed what was wanted was to draw attention to the text, and not to draw the eye from it. They did not want the best artists and perfect pictures. There were no instances of great artists painting missals, except one or two by Perugino and Leonardo da Vinci, which were hoarded as curiosities, and kept out of sight.

Speaking of colors, Mr. Ruskin remarked that, as a rule, great colorists seemed sensual—even Correggio having painted subjects unfit for the pencil. Pure outline seemed to him like clear articulation—outline and color like clear articulation and singing—and outline, color, and light, and shade, to combine in one man, seemed to resemble the talent that could manage an orchestra. No one could ever attain the variety of color. There were a million tints in a human cheek; and no color could be natural that had not variety. The lecturer then proceeded to defend himself against the charge of not being practical. He had been the whole of his life endeavoring to explode ideal fallacies and replace them with ideal truths. He concluded by advising his hearers, who practised illuminating, to pursue a truthful and grand system of labor; being assured that they would thus secure honor among men, and earn the reward of self-approbation.

In explanation of a point in our summary of Mr. Ruskin's Lecture on Color, the lecturer writes:—"I should be obliged to you if you would correct the mis-statement in your last number, of what I said respecting purple and scarlet in my last lecture at the Architectural Museum, as your reporter seems to have mixed his notes, and has precisely reversed my statement. I said, that nearly all harmonies of color, in which red was prominent, were best attained, in illumination, by mingling purple with scarlet, and avoiding crimson. I said, that nature always used purple and scarlet in her dawns and sunrises, but rarely crimson; and I showed the flower of the cactus as an example of the union of purple with scarlet, not with crimson. What I brought forward afterwards respecting the Venetian masters, referred entirely to the varieties of dim scarlet and purple which are found in their works. The flowers with which the idea of blood is nominally associated are crimson, not scarlet."

"I have the honor, &c.,

"J. RUSKIN."

From a late number of the *Athenæum*, we extract the following, bearing upon a subject upon which we shall have more to say hereafter. We do not know to what extent manufacturers, in this country, avail themselves of original designs in their various productions, but we do know that it is a matter of much interest to them, and one which should lead them to do all in their power to encourage schools of design, and the cause of Art generally.

In connection with this subject, we state a fact, which illustrates the necessity of a copyright law to protect more branches of braindom than that of literature. An invoice of goods of choice design was shipped from Europe, and pattern-cards sent to the

consignees by the same vessel. On arrival of the vessel, one of the pattern-cards fell into the hands of a manufacturer's agent, who immediately sent it to "the works." The importers of the foreign goods passed their merchandise through the Custom House, and offered it to the trade for sale; but what was their astonishment when they did so, to encounter in the market the same goods in appearance—their own choice design—at a lower price—even below the cost of the original article! The design had been copied, the goods manufactured, and sent to market, while the foreign goods were "dragging their slow length along" through the Custom House.—EDS. CRAYON.

Mr. Mercer, a practical designer, calls attention to a mistake which appears in a popular magazine—and is generally shared, we think, by the outside public—as to the present position of artistic design in England, and the dependence of our manufacturers on the skill of the Parisian artist. Mr. Mercer, writing to a local paper, says:—"Fraser's Magazine," for the current month, in an article, entitled, 'Painting in England,' writes:—"A very few years ago, ere yet our schools of design had arisen, no original patterns of any kind were issued by the hand of the English artist. It was impossible that an Englishman could make a skillful design. But, in 1854, '*nous avons changé tout cela*,' and the manufacturer no longer makes his perennial trips to Paris, in search of novelty and fashion! Practical acquaintance with this subject enables us to state that, so far is the latter part of the extract from being correct, that the business transacted by English, and more especially by the Manchester manufacturers with Parisian designers, is in no degree less extended than it was some years ago. I feel confident that I do not make an exaggerated calculation, when I state that at least £20,000 is now annually expended on the purchase of French designs and French *échantillons*, by our English printers. The number of designers' ateliers in Paris have rapidly increased during the last two or three years, owing, as we may be sure, almost exclusively to the great encouragement afforded them from the sources just mentioned. Paris, in spite of all its social and political changes—the city of revolutions—is still as preëminently the central emporium of fashion and of taste, as it was ere a single school of design existed in this country. The writer of the above extract is not only totally wrong with regard to facts; he is equally far from the truth in his inferences respecting the influence which he supposes schools of design to have exercised on the industrial Art of this country. Up to the present period, the Art-education, commenced but a few years ago in our schools of design, has been little more than a series of experiments: changes of systems and masters, disputes between the government inspectors and local councils, the difficulty of assigning a proper place to the teaching of Art in its connection with manufactures, have been till very lately the leading characteristics in our efforts to improve the artistic capabilities of the English designer. And, indeed, how could it have been otherwise in a country where scarcely anything had ever been previously attempted in a similar direction, and where a comparatively new and difficult problem had to be encountered, in the attempt to apply a higher standard of Art to the limited executive condition of our various industrial productions? To imagine that, out of such mere beginnings, a new class of designers has already arisen, equal to the French, whose schools of design and galleries of paintings have been in existence, free, and open to all, for such a long period, is paying a higher

compliment to our progressive capabilities than the most favorable view of the facts will justify. By far the greater number of our present designers have never received any teaching whatever in these schools. The great number of the students consists of those who are learning the business, and who have not yet gained the position of actual designers. When the transition from this apprenticeship stage has been passed, and a class of English designers arises who have received their education in these schools, then it will be soon enough to seek for the fruits, and to criticise the principle of our present attempts for the improvement of Art. That we may be allowed to be very sanguine with respect to the consequences, is admissible; but that we should already seek for them, nay, even profess to find them, only proves our inexperience of the slowly operating character of all great and real educational advancement. For any improvement that may have manifested itself of late in industrial design, we are indebted, not to our own schools, but to the increased union of English capital and Parisian taste, to the introduction into this country of French workmen, whose superior productions have stirred up a spirit of emulation amongst English designers, as complimentary to the former as it has been beneficial to the latter." This explanation and admission seems to us just and reasonable; and not only applicable to the remarks on which it is based, but also to popular Art criticism in general. In these matters we have not yet learned the virtues of patience.

Correspondence.

ART AND THE DRAMA.

PARIS, Jan. 4, 1855.

LIFE is truly made up of melancholy contrasts. Everybody that moves in the world of Paris, interested in the Arts and in Literature—the *attachés* of the press both great or small—beautiful actresses on the mimic stage, as well as in the world of fashion—in a word, all of the charming class which rules by the force of wit and beauty, were assembled the other evening at the *Théâtre Français* to witness the first performance of a comedy by one of the best actors of the company, M. Samson. The house, beaming with splendor and smiles, fairly rung with its oft-repeated applause. One lovely woman, however, was missing at the entertainment given at her own house, and more than one among the audience, forgetting the performance on the stage, would turn with serious face and saddened eye, to gaze upon her empty box.

On the morning of the next day, the Church of the Madeleine, draped in black, stood open to receive the attendants upon a funeral ceremony. All the artists, all the writers, and many of the bewitching actresses, seen the evening before upon the stage, were grouped around the bier of Madame Arsène Houssaye, the admired and lamented wife of the young director of the *Théâtre Français*. Madame Arsène Houssaye, taken away at the age of twenty-eight, after a tedious and painful affection of the heart, was related, by her mother, to the world of Art. Daughter of Madame Edmée Brucy, whom Prud'hon had counted among his pupils, she had been reared by a taste most *spirituelle*, and her nature, already ethereal, had become still more refined by education. She understood remarkably well the beautiful language of the poets. How many times have we watched her in that box, where she will be seen

no more, radiant with youthful charms, and decked with violets, or the pure white rose, applauding with her pretty hands, the actresses and friends whom she loved! She was kind to all who wielded the pen or the pencil, and she was conscious of being almost their equal. Who among us all has not gazed upon her in the saloons of the *Rue du Bac*, or at her hotel in the *Avenue Chateaubriand*, enthroned like a queen in the midst of a circle, where mingled together Mlle. Rachel and Eugène Delacroix, Augustine Brohan and Alexandre Dumas, Madame Victor Hugo, and the illustrious poet whose name she bears,—Clévinger, Théophile Gautier, Vidal, finally the entire class of attentive artists and men of letters?

But let us return to M. Samson's little drama. Like Molière and like Shakspeare, but infinitely less great than these glorious masters, M. Samson, who is one of the most capable artists of the French comedy, adds to this excellence the talent of a writer. *La Belle Mère*, *Le Gendre*, and *La Famille Poison*, represented formerly, were quite successful: so, also, with the new piece of *La Dot de ma Fille*. Nothing more simple than this little comedy, which seems to have been composed expressly for performance between two screens in the space of a provincial parlor! It is the story of a German *savant*. He has no other fortune than his library, and is obliged to part with it, in order to give his daughter a dowry. It is certainly not a very dramatic subject, but M. Samson has treated the characters skillfully, and has shown, in the management of details, a perception which no one gave him credit for. Unfortunately the piece is written in verse lacking both variety and vigor, and the style is decidedly feeble. That which is most remarkable in this little family-comedy, is the representation of it. M. Samson reserved for himself the part of the bookworm; generally of a sarcastic spirit, and full of irony, he gave this character with much feeling, even approaching pathos. Thus has this actor-author been doubly successful.

If ever Art and Literature should desert the *Théâtre Français*, we now know where to seek them. The *Gymnase*, so long content with wearisome vaudevilles, has secured the aid of well-known authors, and through them it has become an attractive place. It may be styled the *Théâtre Français* in miniature. George Sand, Emile Augier, Alexandre Dumas, the younger, have furnished for this stage excellent and life-like comedies, as well as touching dramas. The *Gymnase* has lately made a new acquisition, which may be considered a truly great literary conquest. Madame de Girardin, descending from the regions where her muse commonly dwells, has written for it a little piece, called *The Watchmaker's Hat*, and it will prove to be one of the great successes of the winter. Madame de Girardin has had the courage to give us a true vaudeville, full of gaiety and explosive with laughter. Amedée, a zealous but awkward servant, while arranging his master's apartment, has the misfortune to break his clock in pieces; in order to conceal the accident, the poor fellow contrives a thousand ingenious tricks, and finally, at his wit's end, sends for a clockmaker, who carries off the remains, but, in his haste, forgets and leaves his hat

upon the table. When the master of the house returns, he observes the hat, and at once entertains jealous sentiments, for he supposes that his wife has a lover: everything is explained, however, by the return of the watchmaker, who comes back to look for his forgotten hat. Upon this foundation, which is neither new nor complicated, Madame de Girardin has constructed a dialogue glowing with wit and animation; the situations are comic, and the incidents are well drawn out, and rapidly given. From the rising of the curtain to its fall, the house is convulsed with laughter, and the fit hangs on after one leaves the theatre behind him. Moreover, this charming little piece is extremely well performed by Bertoy and Dupais, and, above all, by Lessueur, the awkward servant who breaks the clock. *The Watchmaker's Hat* is, indeed, something more than a trifling production, but it has a value when one is reminded that it comes from the intelligent pen of her who gave us *La joie fait peur*. To combine thus tears with laughter is a cleverness rarely found among women.

Observe how soon difficult questions are solved. In my last letter, I wrote in relation to *Ernani*, that the audience of the *Italiens* were not yet familiar with Verdi, and that there might be some difficulty in France in the way of appreciating the true value of this master. Well, what was true last month is not so to-day: *Il Trovatore* has been played at the *Italiens*, and everything is changed. Paris, but lately timid, even hostile, is now enthusiastic. The *Trovatore* of Joseph Verdi was performed for the first time at Rome, at the *Apollo Theatre*, during the carnival of 1853, and it obtained a wonderful success. All Italy was alive with this bold work, and there are few scenes in this opera which were not welcomed with renewed applause. Paris was behindhand, but now that the representation has taken place, Verdi himself will admit that he has lost nothing by waiting patiently. He has finally obtained the verdict of connoisseurs who, if not the most intelligent, are, at least, the most difficult to please, and, above all, the most alive to every novelty in the way of Art and of Music.

It is not our disposition to analyze the poem upon which Verdi has strung his melodies. It is well known that the authors of opera *libretti* pay but little attention to probabilities, to sentiment, or to judgment. They seek first for musical situations without especially regarding the truth of the causes which produce them. This feeling has governed Salvatore Cammarano, the author of the *Trovatore*. Without troubling himself about the strict rules of dramatic Art, he has inlaid his poem with murders and abductions, duels and suicides, and his heroes are either raging or disconsolate desperadoes. What does it matter, you will say with some truth, if the composer has been able to avail himself of this absurd fable, and throw into it his own sentiment and melody? Joseph Verdi, whose inspiration is so dramatic, has rendered *Il Trovatore* one of the most remarkable operas of the day. Although he may not have abandoned his usual means: namely, the excess of sound—an overstrained, clamorous, and complicated scoring—melodious passages suddenly in-